

JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

UNIT TWO: JESUS FULFILS HIS MISSION

Lessons 2

Peter and the Kingdom

CONTENT:

1. Jesus chose 12 apostles to carry on his mission on earth.
2. Simon was renamed Peter (*Petros*) which means rock (*petra*). Jesus, who called himself the 'corner stone' or 'key-stone', (*Mark12:10*) promised that the church built on Peter would have the victory over the power of death. ('Hades' is the land of the dead)
 - The 'Transfiguration' of Jesus on the mountain is a sign and promise of the resurrection of our own bodies at the end of time.
3. Peter did not, at that time, understand that sharing in the glory of Christ was to come later, not on earth. He did not realise that suffering was part of God's plan for Jesus and also for his followers.
4. Christians nowadays also fail to understand Christ's call, when they try to avoid suffering and seek glory, fame, recognition etc in this life. Just as Christ had to suffer and die, his followers are called to 'take up their cross and follow him.'



REFERENCES: Matthew 16:13-17:9. CCC 551-556.

MATERIALS NEEDED: 1 Bible; handouts, blackboard.

ASSIGNMENT: Look up the Gospels and note down the names of the 12 apostles.

I. STARTER:

- At the last class we talked about kings and kingdoms. Can you tell me the names of some great kings in history? [*Akbar, Ashoka, Alexander the Great...*]
 - How long did their kingdoms last? [*A few hundred years at the most. Many disintegrated as soon as the king died.*]
 - But Jesus' kingdom has lasted 2000 years and is still growing. Jesus took a very important step to ensure that his kingdom carried on even after he left this earth. What was it? [*He appointed people to carry on his work: the 12 apostles, and in particular, Simon Peter.*]
- Today we are going to look at 2 important incidents in Peter's life with Jesus and see what they can tell us about how we can live in the kingdom.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

[Give out handouts. After reading the conversation between Jesus and Peter, discuss the questions in the first exercise [1] with the students. After bringing out the following points, allow students to fill in the answers in their own words.]

1. What is the significance of the name 'Peter'?
Jesus named Simon 'Peter' which is 'Petros' in Greek. The Greek word for rock is 'petra'. Immediately after naming him, Jesus said, 'On this rock I will build my church.'
At another time Jesus called himself the 'cornerstone' or keystone (*Mark12:10*) on which God was building. In other words, Jesus was making Peter his representative.
A house built on rock is stable and secure. He was declaring that the Church built on Peter would stand firm.
2. What did Jesus mean by saying 'the gates of Hades will not prevail' over the Church?
'Hades' according to Jewish understanding is the land of the dead. Jesus was assuring us that death has no power over those who belong to this church.
3. What is the significance of 'handing over the keys'?

It shows that Jesus was handing over the authority to govern the Church. He, and the other apostles with him, also have the power to forgive sins in Jesus' name.

4. Who represents Peter and the other apostles today?

The Pope (At present Pope Benedict XVI) and the bishops appointed by him.

[Read the story of the Transfiguration aloud from the Bible.]

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."

And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Matthew 17:1-9

Also read the words of St. Augustine from the handout. The students now discuss the 1st question in exercise [2] in groups of 3-4. Bring out the following:]

- What message of Jesus did Peter fail to understand?

Peter tried to stop Jesus from going through suffering and death. Later, after seeing Jesus' glory, he wanted to build tents for Jesus and the others and remain on the mountain. He did not, at that time, understand Jesus, who wanted him to understand: **'I have to suffer and so do all my followers. Glory will come later, after you finish working for me and suffering for me.'**

Glory will come later, after you finish working for me and suffering for me.'

We know that Peter understood this message later, and was ready to suffer for Christ, even to the point of being crucified like his master.

[The next question is discussed in the same groups and shared with the class:]

- Do Christians nowadays also fail to understand? Give a practical example to show this.

Many Christians are like Peter (at the time of the transfiguration). They desire glory and also try to avoid suffering at all costs.

For example:

- People want their names mentioned when they give money to the church.
- They want important posts and positions, even when serving in church activities.
- They spend a lot of money on clothes, gadgets, cars, etc to get a name for themselves, and on the other hand, their servants/employees are struggling to survive.
- They avoid helping someone in a road accident, because it means time and trouble.
- They don't speak up if injustice is done because they don't want to get into trouble with people in power.

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

Like Peter, do you also try to build a 'tent on the mountain', instead of going down to earth and working and suffering for Jesus? Think about this and then write down a few changes you want to make in your life. Start the list by writing on top: FROM NOW ON I WILL TRY TO... [Write this caption on the blackboard. Students reflect and then write on the reverse side of their handouts.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT:

Look up the Gospels and note down the names of the 12 apostles in the handouts.